

prospered for the last 16 years under the excellent leadership of James Shelby who was instrumental in raising the funds needed to build its current home. With the leadership of Mr. Shelby and chairwoman Susan Irwin, I am confident the Greater Sacramento Urban League will continue to provide invaluable programs for our community.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to the Greater Sacramento Urban League's distinguished commitment to our community and Sacramento's residents. The Greater Sacramento Urban League's dedication to equality, civil rights and workforce development has helped thousands of Sacramentans when they most needed it. We all are thankful for their efforts. As the Greater Sacramento Urban League's employees and partners gather to celebrate 40 years of service to the Sacramento region, I ask all my colleagues to join me in wishing them continued success in the future.

RECOGNIZING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST AT- TACKS FROM GAZA

SPEECH OF

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 9, 2009

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34, a resolution recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I applaud Speaker PELOSI and Leader BOEHNER for bringing this resolution to the floor.

We stand in solidarity with those praying for real and lasting peace and an end to the terrorism brought upon the people of Israel. I am confident the acts of aggression carried out by those seeking the destruction of the State of Israel will not end in success. Peace will come to the land of Israel once again.

Born out of genocide and conflict, the modern State of Israel has developed into a free, democratic and prosperous country. I have been to Israel several times and I have seen how they make the desert bloom. I have witnessed their corporate compassion to take care of people in need. I have heard their pleas for peace. An unfailing ally of the United States, Israel is a beacon of freedom and religious tolerance in the Middle East.

Israel understands the dangers of terrorism all too well. From suicide bombers to thousands of incoming rockets and mortar shells, the people of Israel have experienced mass casualties of enormous and unacceptable proportions.

As Israel currently undertakes military efforts in Gaza, I stand with the Israeli Government and the Jewish community as they seek to establish peace and protect its citizens from terrorism. Hamas and radical Islam must be defeated.

No nation can sit idly by while its people are killed, its children are traumatized, and the daily life of its people is severely disrupted by terrorism. Ask yourself, would America tolerate more than 3,000 rockets launched against our homeland in just 1 year? No, we would protect our people. Israel has the responsibility to pro-

tect its citizens, as well, and that is what it is doing in on-going operations in Gaza.

Americans look forward to peace in Israel and the Middle East, but until Hamas and its terrorist allies relinquish its arms and renounce violence, the hope for peace can not be attained.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

CONGRATULATING GREGORIO
KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN ON HIS
ELECTION AS THE FIRST DELE-
GATE TO CONGRESS FROM THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan on his historic election as the first Delegate to Congress from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). His election comes twenty-two years after the U.S. Government first granted the residents of the CNMI U.S. Citizenship and 12 years after my predecessor, Congressman Robert A. Underwood, introduced the first bill to provide for a CNMI Delegate in the 104th Congress. Born on the island of Saipan on January 19, 1955, Mr. Sablan graduated from Marianas High School and attended the University of Guam, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Mr. Sablan has a long record of public service to the people of the CNMI beginning with his election to the third Commonwealth Legislature in the CNMI House of Representatives. While in that office, he worked with the Assistant Secretary of the Interior to secure funding for the CNMI. Mr. Sablan returns to the halls of Congress as a Delegate after previously working as a Special Assistant to Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii. Mr. Sablan then returned to the CNMI to work as a Special Assistant for Management and Budget under Governor Froilan Tenorio and most recently, he worked as the Executive Director of the Election Commission.

This historic event for the people of the CNMI and the U.S. Congress marks the first time the CNMI will have representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. The 110th Congress passed legislation that was signed into law by the President on May 8, 2008, and that among its other provisions, authorized the election to Congress of a CNMI Delegate (Title VII of U.S. Public Law 110-229). The addition of the CNMI Delegate seat marks the first time membership in the House has expanded since Congress provided for the election of a Delegate to represent American Samoa in 1980. The addition of the CNMI Delegate seat brings the total number of Delegates representing the territories and the District of Columbia in the House of Representatives to six.

As a neighbor in the Western Pacific and a fellow territorial Delegate, I welcome my new colleague, Mr. Sablan, to Washington, D.C. as the first Delegate to represent the CNMI in Congress. The historically close ties between

the people of Guam and the people of the CNMI will provide for a solid foundation on which to work together toward common goals in Washington, D.C. I look forward to strengthening these ties with Mr. Sablan and working together toward sensible and effective Federal government in the Mariana Islands. This momentous occasion renews the promise of the founding principles of American democracy, that of representative government by its citizens. As we move forward in the 111th Congress, I extend my warmest welcome and congratulations to the people of the CNMI.

BAY PINES VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY
FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, which I have the honor and privilege to represent, has been honored by the Department of Veterans Affairs with the very prestigious Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence Award.

This is the highest honor given to a medical facility by the Department of Veterans Affairs and recognizes organizational excellence which translates in the highest quality of care for our nation's veterans and in this case those who receive their medical care through Bay Pines.

This award confirms what I have always known—that the dedicated staff and volunteers at Bay Pines are the best in the VA system and provide our veterans with the quality of care we would expect and they so richly deserve.

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System is the 4th busiest of the 153 VA Medical Centers and provides services to 94,000 veterans per year at the Bay Pines medical center and at nine linked clinics. Based on the VA's performance criteria, including customer satisfaction surveys, Bay Pines ranks first among like sized facilities nationwide, first among Florida VA facilities, and fourth best in the nation for quality of care, access to care and customer satisfaction.

Bay Pines is the only facility in Florida to receive the Carey Award, which is based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Criteria used by thousands of government and private organizations worldwide to assess and improve performance.

Wallace M. Hopkins, the Director of the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, leads a team of dedicated health care professionals and selfless volunteers who care for our veterans. They continually strive to improve the quality of care our veterans receive and are working on several projects which my colleagues and I on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs have supported. These include the opening of a new and larger emergency room that will more than double the capacity for emergency care for veterans including emergency mental healthcare; a new radiation oncology center to provide veterans with state-of-the-art cancer treatment; a mental health center of excellence to include inpatient, outpatient and PTSD programs; a new and larger eye care clinic; and a new and larger ambulatory surgery center.